

CATHERINE'S HIDDEN LIFE

o exist with it.' Then she: * If Thy truth and Thy justice permitted it, I would that Hell were utterly destroyed, or at least hat no soul ever more should descend thither, and if (so I were till united to Thy charity) I were put over the mouth of Hell o close it, in such wise that none should ever more enter it, much would I rejoice, so that all my neighbours might thus be aved.' " ¹ And, on another occasion, she prayed : " Lord, give ne all the pains and all the infirmities that there are in the world, o bear in my body ; I am fain to offer Thee my body in sacrifice, nd to bear all for the world's sins, that Thou mayest spare it nd change its life to another." "And when she said these words, he was abstracted from her senses and rapt in ecstasy. But, rhen she returned to herself, she was white as snow, and began D laugh loudly and to say : * Love, Love, I have conquered "hee with Thyself. For Thou dost wish to be besought for 'hat Thou canst do of Thine own accord.' " ²

Catherine's first step, after receiving the Dominican habit, 'as to enter upon a prolonged retreat. For three years con-nuously, she kept a complete silence, speaking only with her Dnfessor, Fra Tommaso della Fonte, when she confessed to him, id occasionally with other persons at his bidding. She dwelt antinually within the religious enclosure of her little cell, nor ver left it save when she went to hear Mass. In Fra Raimondo's oetical phrase, " She found the desert within her own house and Dlitute in the midst of people."

Now began the continuous series of her visions. In her arrow cell she smelt the fragrance of celestial lilies, and heard ic ineffable melodies of Paradise, sweetest of all on the lips of lose who had loved Christ on earth with the most ardent love. Father," she said to Fra Tommaso, " do you not hear the lagdalene, how she sings with a high voice and with grace of ngulkr sweetness, in company of all the choir of the blessed ?" hrist Himself appeared to her spiritual eyes, instructed her in ic secret mysteries of the Divinity, conversed continually with

¹ *Lcgenda*, Prologue I. (§ 15).

² *Supplemcntum* (Casanatense MS.), f. 30. Cf. Dante, *Par.* xx. 94-99.